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SHELTON BISSELL

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BY

SHELTON BISSELL, B.D.

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FOREWORD

These little sermons were preached by the author in the First Congregational Church of Boise, Idaho, during the late winter of 1916-1917. At their conclusion the earnest wish was expressed by the members of his Religious Education Committee, at the head of which stood Dr. E. O. Sisson, Commissioner of State Education, that they should be published.

This has been done in the earnest hope that some who have failed to find bread in much of official creeds and platforms of Christianity, may at least be encouraged to continue to look to Christ himself for food.

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UNOFFICIAL CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

CHANGING IDEAS

THE impression that the golden age lies to the rear is one of the persisting fallacies of all time. Tennyson was true to human nature when he observed that

"The past will always win
A glory from its being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein."

In many quarters it is still more popular to eulogize one's ancestry than to emphasize one's posterity. This opinion, in the minds of people, that we have somehow run by the millennium without knowing it, is due largely to the fact that we have lost a good many orthodox anchors. But these disquieted souls are oblivious of the equally patent fact, that each age forges its own anchors. Different times grow different opinions as inevitably as different zones grow different plants.

The supreme business of the church is not to cherish a deposit of truth once delivered to the saints, but to cultivate the garden where the tree of truth grows. Christian dogma never yet has expressed truth fully,—it has approximated it, and this will continue to be the method indefinitely. Thinking about life and living out life do not stand in opposite armed camps. Though the former never fully explains or accounts for the latter, it will never cease to hold the attention of men. The deeper we think, the closer we come to God, who is supreme Mind. "We think God's thoughts after Him."

Religion in the twentieth century will have different ideas about the world and itself than had religion in any other century.

I. *Its Universe is Vaster.* The area wherein its God once moved was "a right little, tight little," comfortably compact and precisely measurable universe. On a waste of waters floated the earth. Over it arched the solid convex firmament. Above the firmament was another waste of waters. In the firmament were windows, and in the earth were doors, and when the windows above and the doors below were opened, the rain fell and the waters rose. From east to west, a little journey, ran the sun each day, like a "strong man, delighting to run a race." In his brief span he measured the entire heavens. Thus the earth was

the centre of the solar and siderial movements. And "above the circle of the earth" sat the anthropomorphic God. To him men looked up,—a static God, permanently resident in a static heaven. From it he made occasional excursions to see what men were doing. To it men aspired to climb, building a tower until God in self-defense brought their work to naught by a babel of tongues. Thus theology was built out of a geo-centric universe, a static heaven, an anthropomorphic and architect God,—and the whole scheme, God and all, was not much bigger than the scroll on which men wrote it down.

But long ago Copernicus smashed this universe to bits when he demonstrated that the earth went round the sun, not the sun round the earth. Later, the telescope infinitely enlarged the boundaries of the universe until our brains reel under the concept of immensity. We envy the nonchalance with which men of science casually tell us that light, traveling 186,000 miles a second, takes three and a half years to reach us from Alpha Centauri, the nearest of the fixed stars. And if we have the patience to calculate how far distant this star lies from us, we are then asked to compute the distance of the farthest star, the light from which, starting when King Solomon built his temple, is just arriving on this earth.

The theology of orthodoxy, however, is not

built on these facts. It still sets up its localized heaven and hell, its limited universe of space, its architect and anthropomorphic God. And yet heaven is not above the earth, nor hell beneath, for there is no up nor down in the universe, but only out. God is not a builder retired from business, who in definite and measurable manner by rule of thumb constructed a compact and delimited celestial system once upon a time; for the system is not yet made, and is never the same from moment to moment, and no one can comprehend the bounds thereof, for it has no bounds. These earlier notions of cosmogeny, celestial geography and the sporadic activity of deity have passed away from the realm of educated thought; but they remain embedded in the dogmas of ecclesiasticism.

II. *Its Time is Infinitely Extended.* The idea of a definitely ascertained date on which things began to be, is a prime essential of the doctrines of orthodoxy. Man emerged from nothingness upon a certain day, 4004 years before Christ. All the vast, complex, and differentiated life of this planet has been crowded into this brief 5900 years since that time. Races, nations, literature, the arts and sciences, civilization, culture,—all these have been born and cradled and reared and many of them have died and been buried within this all too short span. Now the very brevity of this

world process necessitated a scheme of special and instantaneous creation. Six thousand years were not long enough for gradual growth. God must start some things at maturity. As Athene sprang full-armed from the head of Zeus, so biological species and ranks and orders leaped fully developed from the earth. Yet, although we know that the longevity of great trees and the testimony of fossiliferous strata, the accumulated sediment of rivers and the logic of the growth of society, all point to an immeasurably longer time of human habitation, and organic and inorganic development on this earth, than the paltry 6000 years allowed by the theory of fiat and special creation, the conception of a definitely begun, a something-out-of-nothing-made, and a short careered universe still keep their tenacious grip upon orthodox theology. The longevity, if not the infinity of the time processes of creation, has not sufficiently impressed the minds of the makers of the doctrines of orthodoxy, to lead them to reject the obsolete and discredited, for the true and proven.

III. *Its Man is Nobler.* More significant are the changing ideas about man. Original sin and total depravity have been the twin mill-stones about the neck of humanity.

"In Adam's fall
We sinnèd all,"

was more than a nursery jingle,—it was a portentous doctrinal announcement of doom. From this oracular version of an ancient Semitic legend has come a whole theology of pessimism and human helplessness. It created for itself a terminology abounding in such words and phrases as "total surrender, our lost estate, moral inability, worthless worms, broken and empty vessels," and it magnified God's grace into everything, and whittled man's grit down to nothing.

To-day men believe that they are saved, not by being supplanted by God, but by being supplemented by him. Otherwise creation would seem to have been a waste of God's time. They hold that if Adam tainted the race, God has had plenty of time since to make it wholesome. They assert that what man needs is not surrender but discovery. They believe that humanity, raised to its highest potentiality, is divinity. In brief: that salvation consists in true self-expression through God-contact, not in self-repression through God-usurpation.

Yet a single glance through the pages of the present day theology of orthodoxy will convince one that its doctrines are still deduced from the discarded premises of "depravity and fallen estate," and that it is still sceptical of the ability of man to do very much for himself, despite the fact of his divine kinship.

Once, also, and not so long ago, man was a duality or a trinity. Body warred against spirit, and flesh against soul. Or mind and soul and body were engaged in internecine strife. From this idea came asceticism, and the hurtful practices of flesh-mortifications and flagellations, for the sake of the emancipation and exaltation of the enslaved spirit. This dichotomy and trichotomy of the person has done its injurious work upon the body of Christian thought for centuries, and to-day its baleful effect is felt in every organ. Squarely antagonistic to this is the truth of this age, that personality is a unity. So nicely blended are the elements of body and spirit that what helps and hurts the one, helps and hurts the other. The properties of the bodies are not devilish, bastard, and hostile to the properties of the mind. They are rather the legitimate instruments of the real person, the self-knowing and self-directing ego. Modern psychology, as all really know, insists upon the closest and most intimate relation between the interacting body and mind.

But the theology of orthodoxy is still permeated with the doctrine of man's duality or trinity, with the cognate thought of the opposition of the one to the other. Paul's dictum of a "warring together of flesh and spirit" has been twisted out of its figuratively spiritual meaning, and has been given a literal metaphysical construction which the

words do not warrant.

So, too, man was once thought to be inspired through a kind of temporary soul-dispossession or suspended animation. His individuality was discarded for the time being. He was literally "not himself." He fell into a kind of holy swoon and saw visions and heard voices. Or he became a mere automaton,—a pen-point in the hand of the Almighty. He was an amanuensis, and wrote what God dictated. Now this was a quite logical deduction from the doctrine of man's total depravity. Of and by himself, man could not think or know or do one true or holy thing. Hence God had to pour him full of revelation, as a cup is poured full of water. Man had to guard against mixing up any ideas of his own with the ideas of God. He could be God's private secretary and take down at his dictation what he uttered,—no more. As a passive channel through which the wisdom of the Almighty might trickle, he was a success now and then. As an interpreter of truth through the medium of his own unenlightened intelligence and personal experience, he was a delusion and a snare.

Now, however, it is believed on the best of evidence that inspiration means raising a man's individuality to its highest terms, not reducing it to the vanishing point. The portion of truth which each man utters is colored and characterized by

the peculiar temperament and prepossessions of the speaker. Moral and religious predispositions will affect the quality of his message to this extent, —that they will give to that nugget of truth which the speaker has found, that quality of alloy which is inevitably associated with his fallible nature. As the water takes its color from the soil through which it flows, so the utterance of truth takes its hue from the individuality of the speaker who is its mouthpiece. New psychology does not deny revelation, it denies the old mechanical "suspended animation" ideas of the method of revelation. It finds the channel of communication between the individual and God in that sensitive submerged self, the sub-conscious, upon which the mind of eternal Truth plays as a musician upon his instrument. Even as the musician can express only imperfectly, according to the limitations of his instrument, the thought of the composer, so can the ideal of truth be mirrored forth but dimly and partially. Man does not passively record the picture of God like a sensitive photographic plate, but actively takes the phase of truth which he has found, and gives it shape and color and expression as it passes through the seething crucible of his thoughts.

IV. *Its Processes are Inductive.* Long ago men abandoned *a priori* methods of investigation. Bacon showed the folly of starting with a theory and then hunting for facts to fit the theory. Ex-

periences are the final test. We begin with them, and out of them we derive our principles of thought and action. We examine the universe and find in it order, system, unity, and regularity. We conclude, therefore, that there is a mind and will behind this cosmos, and we call this mind and will, "God." Once men would have begun with an idea about God, which they had excogitated from metaphysics, or logic, or fancy, and would have bent the facts to fit the theory, no matter what resulted to the facts.

The inductive process is more widely operative than we suspect. There is not a cherished convention or institution which is not being weighed in the scales of induction. Do the facts of life, the needs of humanity, the large axiomatic and indubitable verities, intuitively known, warrant these same conventions and institutions? If not, must they be merely modified, or swept aside *in toto?* The church, the state, the marriage relation, the home, the school,—these time-honored institutions, cherished and enriched by Christianity, must defend themselves against a growing clamor of criticism. If these institutions will minister to the fundamental needs of social man, if they will increase his vitality, dignity, and happiness, then they will stand. But if, in our highly complex and rapidly socializing civilization, these ancient conventions, like lumbering stage-coaches, will not

carry mankind safely and swiftly along the highway of life, then they must be superseded by other vehicles more adapted to the time. Thus we start, not with an *a priori* theory about the inviolability and everlasting sanctity of these institutions upon which we have built our modern world, but rather we start with experiences, aspirations, intuitions; and rigidly insist that these shall be conserved by the habits and conventions of society. Even if this method of induction should be highly inconvenient to religious practices, it undoubtedly has come to stay, and theology ought to make the most of it. But it is quite evident that the method of orthodoxy is to make the institution—the church, the Sabbath, the sacrament, marriage, home and the like—the primary and paramount thing, whether the needs of a modern world are met adequately by them or not.

Evolution—which is another way of saying that organic life, individual and social, becomes differentiated through forces operating and inherent within each body rather than through special acts of creation and modification exerted from without the body—is known to-day to be the method of progress. It is all the more regrettable, therefore, that evolution is *anathema maranatha* to the theology of orthodoxy, and that those who wear its sign and own its sway may not hope to enter the portals of an officially accredited evan-

gelical faith.

Honestly to recognize changing ideas, and to adjust the timeless principles of religion to the temporary thought-forms of the day so that religion may not be a thing apart, antique, and misunderstood, is the heroic task of the Christian world. Truth is a matter of all times, and has resources for all needs. From whatever point of compass the wind may blow, the mariner uses the same rudder to steer him to the desired haven.

"New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth,
He must upward go, and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth."

CHAPTER II

CHANGELESS IDEALS

AN idea is passive, an ideal is active. An ideal is an idea in motion, accomplishing something,—that has the power to make the one who cherishes it its disciple, defender, crusader. An ideal is able to recruit men, set them to work, arouse energy. An ideal is an idea dynamized and magnetized. An idea is the object of men's contemplation; an ideal, the object of their conviction. The former is a picture to view; the latter, a motive to drive. Men hold the idea of knowledge, and about it they speculate, argue, discuss. They may admire and exalt it, but not follow it. But men hold the ideal of knowledge, and for it they will sacrifice health and comfort, toward it they will struggle with grim determination, and in comparison with it they will count all earthly riches and treasure as mere dross.

This being so, it follows that a man is worth his ideals, not his ideas. The former persist, the latter change. The latter touch the periphery of a man, the former become immanent in his moral

consciousness. If religion seems open to conviction on the charge of failing to meet ideas, she becomes vindicated as exalting ideals. So long as she inspires men to seek ends, rather than to think on means, so long will she be invincible.

There are three ideals at least which religion has never lost, and which, as religion, she never can lose. These ideals, it is true, sometimes have been repudiated by pseudo-religion, dogmatism, and ecclesiasticism. But the life of genuine religion depends upon them, and to them the truly religious man will cling. They are:

I. *Sincerity,* an ideal affecting the integrity of a man's soul.

II. *Loyalty,* an ideal affecting a man's relation to God.

III. *Unity,* an ideal affecting a man's relations to his fellows.

I. *Sincerity.* There is only one thing more disastrous than dishonesty toward others, and that is dishonesty toward oneself. Unless one is absolutely sincere with his own soul he cannot be sincere with others. Jesus found an appalling amount of insincerity being palmed off as genuine piety. He was compelled to call the respectable hypocrites of his day by some harsh names in order to do justice to his feelings, and to them. "Whitewashed sepulchres" and "dirty cups and platters" were some of the richly deserved epi-

thets which he applied to them. This he did, primarily, because they were trying to fool people. They began by fooling themselves, and ended, of course, by fooling most everybody else.

The need of sincerity was never more urgent, largely because the demand of society, politics, ecclesiasticism is "conformity." In college life a man who breaks with sacred tradition "queers himself." In politics, a man who leaves his party is disciplined. In society, a man who defies custom is ostracised. In ecclesiasticism, a man who renounces orthodoxy is banned. Seldom is the question raised: "If these excommunicants are sincere, should not their opinions be tolerated, even respected?" Conformity is not a sure prophylactic. Sincerity is. A tainted community will be disinfected more quickly through heresy than through orthodoxy, if perchance the former is sincere and the latter not.

The very life of religion depends upon sincerity. It is not going to be a child's task to preserve this life. The official creeds are barnacled with doctrines which many honest men must repudiate. Yet there are those who conform to these creeds who cannot sincerely believe them. This seems a monstrous charge to make. But facts bear out this assertion. Those who hold holy orders in one of the historic churches of Christendom must agree that "divine grace can come to man only

through the medium of an unbroken apostolic succession." This means that in no other way, save through the sacrament of Holy Communion administered by a priest in that particular church, can the good, healthy life of God get into a man. Yet one who speaks from an intimate acquaintanceship with the church in question, and who speaks uncontradicted, says: "Everybody knows that there are numbers of Anglican clergymen who do not believe that the charismatic gift is dependent upon an unbroken apostolic succession. . . . Everybody knows also that no layman, not even a non-conformist minister, can take orders in the Anglican church without submitting to that ecclesiastical ceremony by which he professes his belief in that doctrine."

Will any one doubt that there are large numbers of worshipers who in their hearts honestly question the truth of the assertion that Jesus was "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," and yet who glibly patter the Apostolic Creed each Sunday? Even in the articles of faith of the so-called more liberal churches, there are items referring to the infallibility of the scriptures, the metaphysical nature of the Trinity, and the substitutionary method of the atonement, which should be expunged in the interest of strict honesty. "The world will little note nor long remember" any creed the adherents of which are

with reason suspected of holding it with certain strong mental reservations, or disingenuous explanations. "Let your speech be yea, yea; nay, nay;" said the great Master of sincerity, and added, "whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." And the implication may be as strongly in the direction of creeds that mean exactly what they say, as in the direction of a speech unadorned by expletives.

The prime business of a Christian is to assemble the facts of life; mobilize the experiences; marshal the intuitions; then examine them with honesty, humility, and a mind hospitable to truth; heat them all with the fire of a pure enthusiasm, fusing them together for a great and unselfish purpose; and then, whatever the result may be, to hold to it. Let a man "will to believe." Let him bring to bear all the desire to be orthodox that he may. There will be unique occasions when what appears from the seething caldron is not the conviction which he had anticipated. There will be times when the bland egg of creed may hatch an ugly duckling. And all the orthodox barn-yard fowls may cackle at him that he has got an "undesirable barn-yard citizen," and with many a cruel peck they will banish him from the domestic precincts. But he knows that though it be not a proper duckling, it has a right to lie on the straw and sail on the pond. And some day, in the slow turn-

ing of the wheel of time, it will prove to be a glorious swan.

Let Christianity beware of compromising with sincerity for the sake of orthodoxy.

II. *Loyalty.* The religion of the twentieth century will insist upon that heart-attachment to the eternal God which shall save men. Nothing short of that kind of loyalty will avail. It was the only loyalty that counted with Christ. He emphatically asserted that there was no law greater than allegiance to God with heart and mind and soul and strength. This puts all of a man in intimate contact with God. In feeling, in thinking, in aspirations, in his physical powers, even, he is to be an unswerving partisan of the Almighty.

Now loyalty, as a virtue, is not unknown to the theology of orthodoxy. But it is the minor and subordinate loyalty to sacraments, formulæ, rituals, institutions and dogmatic infallibles. All these may be short of God. In point of fact, they generally are. The proof of this is found in the refusal of orthodoxy to abate its creed one jot or tittle in the face of radical and sweeping modifications of men's ideas of God. The rigidity of orthodoxy convicts it of disloyalty to the very principle about which it claims to be most orthodox. In utter loyalty a man may break with a theology. What happens? He is damned by the adherents of that theology. And for what? For

disloyalty to the *theology* without reference to God. He who doubts this, easily may make the test. It will be necessary for him merely to express his opinion that the ideal of the Kingdom is independent of any belief in the total inerrancy of Scripture, the substitutionary nature of the atonement, the virgin birth, the physical resurrection, the metaphysical trinity, the observance of the sacraments of baptism and the Supper, a spatial and material heaven and hell, and a membership in an evangelical church. Startling results will be sure to follow. Honestly believing all this, this same belief will not be "counted unto him for righteousness." His shrift will be short and his excommunication long. He has been disloyal to orthodoxy,—what matter about his loyalty to God?

As the demands of this age are for sincerity in the first place, so it inevitably follows that if a man's sincerity leads him to break with orthodoxy in the interest of loyalty to God, there shall be nothing but approval for the departure. This demand will result in more flexible creeds, so constructed as to be adjustable to honest modifications of convictions which occur from time to time. The heresy of the twentieth century is going to be insincerity in the first place, and then, as a corollary, loyalty to a creed which is disloyal to God. To make it possible for a man to be both

loyal to God and loyal to creed, will be the stimulating task of the religion of this age.

III. *Unity.* This is the ideal which affects a man's relations to his fellows. In sheer self-defense to-day, the church is putting this in the fore-front of its platforms. The alarming evidences of disintegration, so visible on every hand, may be unerringly traced to the schismatic spirit of sectarianism, which has made the church impotent to mitigate the woes of a world in torment.

But at the very outset a distinction between unity and uniformity should be drawn. Nor is this done in a spirit of casuistry, nor in the interests of an ecclesiastical system. It is not intended to becloud the issue through logomachy. The argument is not to run thus:

1. The demand is for uniformity.
2. Doing away with sectarianism would mean uniformity.
3. But unity, not uniformity, is the real need.
4. Hence we shall not help matters by interfering.

The argument will run, rather:

1. The demand is for unity.
2. Doing away with sectarianism would mean uniformity, not necessarily unity.
3. A modified sectarianism would mean unity.

4. Hence let us modify sectarianism, not do away with it.

Uniformity is an outward, artificial, and non-vital agreement in method and order. Unity is an inner, spontaneous, and vital agreement in spirit and principle. You may have heterogeneity and lack of cohesion, and yet have uniformity. You may have dissimilarity in form and variety in expression and yet have unity. There may be unity in a democracy of states, differing widely in their several characteristics. There may be lack of unity in a monarchy, all parts of which look and act alike. For religion to demand uniformity, therefore, would be for it to ask for a stone instead of a loaf. For it to demand unity, however, is simply for it to adopt life-saving precautions. If it can have unity by preserving all of the sects, they will be preserved; if it can have unity by destroying some of them, it will destroy them. The prime demand is unity, not uniformity.

A little consideration will convince any honest person that to persist and do its work and cope with hostile forces, themselves united, religion must make a much more serious-minded and resolute effort toward unity than it has heretofore made. No half-hearted compromises will avail. There must be sacrifice, the heroic cutting down to the quick, the true unselfish renunciation of cherished, but non-essential religious hobbies. The

liberal will have to surrender some things, as well as the conservative, for the former has gone as far ahead of the procession as the latter has fallen behind. The process is going to be a painful one, and there is going to be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. But it is the only way.

Some churches are ready even now. As a rule, they stand midway between the rear and advance guard. They have announced their willingness to seek a common ground of conviction with other communions. They may not believe that it is necessary to abolish the institutional forms by means of which they work, simply in order to agree in spirit with those who hold other forms. But they are resolved never to allow ritual, rubric, sacrament, polity, or ecclesiastical tradition to stand between them and a good, healthy, sympathetic understanding with their neighbor denominations. When this spirit appears, unity is not far away.

It may make its approach along any one of several different avenues. It may come from lands of far suns and alien tongues, where the pagan, for his very soul's sake, must not suspect a divided Christendom. Here the missionary becomes an "Episco-presby-gationalist," combining the best that there is in one polity, with the best that there is in the others. For the untutored savage and the sophisticated oriental alike, it would be a fatal in-

dictment against Christianity to differentiate between the various cross-breeds and hybrids of Protestant faith which are on exhibition in the occident. "Is Christ divided?" would be the more-than-silencing rejoinder of the object of an evangelizing solicitude, to sectarian invitation. Back to the sluggish and muddied stream of a European and American conventionalized Christianity may yet flow the purer waters of an Asian or African faith in Jesus, quickening and purifying the former, not the least evidence of which shall be the birth of the spirit of Christian unity.

Or the very urgency of the present world crisis, which has well-nigh overwhelmed the church in Europe under the threefold indictment of infidelity, inefficiency and imbecility, may operate to wipe out the schismatic spirit. For generations the established and non-established churches of the British Empire have stood locked in combat, each grimly determined to abate not a jot the classic hostility which they piously have received as a legacy from former generations. To-day the face of the world has changed. The trenches have made strange bedfellows. In the withering fire of death, old controversies have been forgotten. Back from the battle-front come the healing influences. Says a leading spokesman for the nonliturgists, "relations between Anglicans and Nonconformists are more cordial than they have ever

been." In accepting an invitation to occupy the pulpit of the leading and most militant non-conformist church in England, the Dean of Durham, speaking as a high official in the Established church, remarks: "I hold it the plainest duty of the parent church of England to draw closer and make effective for service the spiritual links which unite the divided sections of English-speaking Christendom in an unexpressed but conscious unity."

From another quarter the approach may conceivably come. The American clergyman, recognizing the loss of efficiency in the present system, whereby one minister is required to be an expert in many lines, thereby proving inept in some of them, pleads for such specialization and differentiation among the clergy, that the one who is most fitted for a certain department of Christian labor may devote his whole time to that particular work. Thus the one who possesses the homiletical gift predominantly shall not be compelled to squander his time and ability upon details of administration, teaching, pastoral work, or social service. He shall be a preacher, supremely and exclusively, with the necessary time for study and the fusing of thought in the fires of meditation and feeling. The one who possesses peculiar teaching ability shall devote his entire time to religious education in the church and community.

Thus the specialization shall continue. But, by the nature of the case, this involves a more united Christian polity than we have. There must be amalgamation, re-grouping, elimination, a general re-arrangement of Protestant divisions, and a consequent reduction of separate competing bodies in every community if this is to be adopted. Small matters of disagreement in doctrine and polity must be dropped overboard by common consent. Comity and co-operation must be the watchword of the hour. In the Middle-West this scheme is seriously and vigorously advanced by the pastor of a large Baptist church. Asked whether, in the necessary abandonment of cherished views in order to bring about unity, he will be willing to make the form of baptism an optional one as between sprinkling and immersion, he replies: "Whether we Baptists would make concessions in order to bring about the federation I suggest, so far as I am concerned personally, I should say 'yes' with great emphasis, and there are scores and hundreds of younger men in our denomination that feel exactly as I do."

Unofficial Christianity of the twentieth century is to be characterized by ideals, rather than ideas. Up to the present the latter, not the former, have been predominant. Among the most potent forces which will rule Christian men and women in this age will be sincerity, loyalty, and unity.

CHAPTER III

GETTING RID OF AN EXCOMMUNICATED GOD

THERE are two contrasting cries which come up to us out of the heart of the Old Testament. The one is the despairing utterance of a God-fearing man who felt himself deserted by the Almighty in the hour of his crisis, and whose plaintive lament was, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" The other was the lofty rhetorical question of a soul transfigured,

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit,
And whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

The difference between these two cries, is the difference between the query where God is, and the query where God is not. It is the difference between the faith that God is somewhere, and that he is everywhere. The latter is the word of belief, but the former is not the word of infidelity. Both are expressions of faith at different stages of religious development. The former means a God detached, remote, permanently residing apart from his creation, with

arrivals and departures according to a time-schedule, "subject to change without notice," characterized by interventions and special providences, miracles, and theophanies. The latter means a God at hand, indwelling, permanently residing within his creation, controlling and informing it, as a spirit dominates a body, continually expressing his will in the *modus operandi* of the universe, and so glorifying the natural order, that "every common bush's aflame with God."

Granting that the religion of the twentieth century must conceive of God under the thought forms of immanence, it remains to offer a sufficient apologetic in the face of the partisans of the theology of orthodoxy, who may not be acquitted of defending the doctrine of a detached and transcendent God, and therefore one who is more somewhere than everywhere. Now God cannot be both wholly within his creation, and at the same time wholly without it. It would be a contradiction in terms and in fact. But just as the true Jesus was within the visible, physical body; so the Almighty is within his creation. If this latter is the vital and prevailing view to-day, it may be defended on two grounds: first, our relation to God is a moral, not a mechanical one; second, our relation to him is a natural, not a formal one.

I. *Our Relation to God is a Moral, not a Mechanical One.* Our starting point must be the

presence of certain inconsistent and even antagonistic elements in the world. Sin, evil, suffering, death,—these have to be accounted for without being disloyal to a God who is, by the nature of the case, both all-powerful and all-good. Some, like John Stuart Mill and, more recently, George Bernard Shaw, frankly wash their hands of such a hypothetical God. The former propounds his famous dilemma,—"Either God could have prevented evil and did not,—or he would have prevented evil, and could not. If I accept the first, I conclude that he is not all good. If I accept the second, then he is not all-powerful." Having led us into the maze, Mill leaves us there to find our way out, although for himself, he would frankly sacrifice God's omnipotence in order to save his benevolence. Shaw cheerfully chooses the same alternative, also, with this quite Shavianesque suggestion, that God himself, with the very best of intentions, is only experimenting and approximating at good, doing the best with the material he has on hand, but impotent to get better results.

Now if the majority of us are constrained to reject both of these explanations, what remains? The believer in a non-resident Deity answers that evil has been precipitated into the universe by an all-wise power for inscrutable but good and sufficient reasons, and that at certain indeterminate times he will intervene in order to give the uni-

verse a shove toward righteousness, or repair the damage done by the depraved wills of men, or rectify some vagrant tendency in nature. Thus we get the "interventionalist" type of Christian, who looks to see Satan bound and cast into the pit, and who ardently awaits the coming of the great and glorious day when Jesus shall return and set up his Kingdom. In brief, the only logical conclusion to which we are driven if we accept the premise of a transcendent God who is at the same time both all-powerful and all-good, is the mechanical one. But note where that leads. Goodness is to be accomplished by God through coercion. God becomes an infinite arbiter with power to compel his decisions. Man yields because he must; God gets what he wants, that is all. The millennium is to arrive because God produces it, not because man is ready for it. It is a kind of transcendent case of "might makes right."

On the other hand, we are convinced that this is a moral universe. There is no satisfaction in thinking that God by dint of superior prowess is going to get what he is after in the end. In point of fact, man is not made good, he becomes good. For God to arrive from without periodically and by special dispensation repair the universe, would simply mean that he could make men behave themselves,—it would not mean that men were becoming good. Even so, a magisterial

disciplinarian might interfere to compose the violence of a turbulent company, and by dint of physical prowess or direful threat produce an appearance of calm. But there can be no real solution of evil until man desires to be right. Omnipotence cannot do more than make men refrain from evil, man must choose to be good himself.

This suggests what really has happened. God, ever with us, ever the indwelling spirit of the visible world, ever has willed good to us. As free spirits derived from him, we are allowed to accept his good intentions or not as we choose. Anything short of that would mean an artificial, toy universe for God to play with. In the clash of wills, human and divine, God's sometimes goes down. "Gipsy" Smith used to say: "God can open the blind eye, or unstop the deaf ear, or paint a lily-bell, or form a dewdrop, or create the trill of the bird-song, or open the gates of the morning without a creak of their hinges, or set an atom swinging in the sunshine, with all its rhythm and poetry, as much as in the movement of a constellation; but he can save no man against his will." To become good, man must will to be good. He may overthrow God's good intentions for him. But the end of God's defeat is the beginning of man's education. The problem of a moral universe is to bring it to pass that man shall choose to follow after good, not that man shall be compelled to

make good. It is when we ask, seek, knock, that the normal relations are established. As Victor Hugo put it, "Nothing is so stupid as conquering, the true glory is in convincing." And God is not stupid enough merely to overwhelm us, he must persuade us.

This is the real problem of the earthly home. Order, obedience, thrift, must be maintained through the voluntary acquiescence of the children. The question is not, as an American educator has phrased it, "I will conquer that child, no matter what it may cost him; but, I will help that child to conquer himself, no matter what it may cost me." The discipline of life is another name for the inevitable trouble that comes to a man when he gets the best of God for the time being. In the long-run, years, centuries, ages, man learns that he pays too heavy a price to have his own way. Chastened and instructed, he will habituate himself to a life in harmony with divine purpose and goodness. He will love truth and right for their own sake. He will become good of his own volition, and reap the peaceable fruits thereof.

II. *Our Relation to God is a Natural, not a Formal One.* The theology of orthodoxy always has taken its terminology and analogies from the social and political complex of its day. Monarchy, aristocracy, feudalism, democracy, are all so many moulds into which has run the molten thought of

each age about God. The Almighty has been an absolute monarch and man has been an unruly subject. The problem then becomes one of satisfying outraged majesty. Or, God has been a judge and man a culprit, and the problem then has resolved itself into the vindication of broken law. Or, God has been a creditor and man a debtor, and the problem then becomes one of paying a commercial obligation. In consequence, we have had theories of the atonement whereby Christ did gratuitous things for man which put him right with God. These theories are based upon ideas of God derived from passing human communal and governmental relationships. They were merely formal, forensic, artificial. A subject may remove from the kingdom and change his citizenship. A culprit may obtain a different venue and thus come under the jurisdiction of another judge. A debtor may go into bankruptcy and thus escape the payment of his debts. The point to be observed is this: in all these relationships, God and man have been brought together in ways which are not vital and inevitable and inescapable, but on the contrary are artificial, humanly arranged, and purely hypothetical. The only relation between the two which can be true, is that which postulates a permanent, essential, and spiritual affinity. God was not in Jesus Christ as a king, or judge, or creditor, or any other political, judicial, or economic functionary.

He was in Jesus Christ as a revealed Father. His dealings with us are domestic and paternal, not commercial, forensic, or governmental. Only the former relation preserves our sense of kindly intimacy. With a father we may have communication; from king, judge, creditor, we receive only excommunication. All arrangements made for atonement of guilt, smack of formality and artificiality, as if we are being haled into an infinite court before an infinite bar. But if we are within the eternal precincts of God's home, then atonement becomes not a formal expression of law, but a natural expression of love. The only thing for which we human fathers wait in order to forgive, is a voluntary confession of guilt, and a manifestation of contrition on the part of the one whose act has broken the domestic peace and harmony. When such evidence of penitence appears, the ordinary father requires nothing more in order gladly to restore the offender to the place he had lost by virtue of his own act. Now, either we are all wrong, and should demand an innocent victim upon which to inflict the punishment belonging to the offender, before said offender may be forgiven; or else, if we are right, the theology of orthodoxy with its substitutionary blood atonement is all wrong. If our relation with God is one of natural affinity, it would appear as though he needed nothing but our contrition, to cause his for-

giveness to occur.

One final consideration leads us to believe in the natural rather than the formal relation. In all the various guises under which the latter theory is presented, it is not necessary for God to feel anything approaching affection in the entire transaction. The king whose outraged majesty is satisfied; the judge whose regard for violated law is justified; and the creditor whose bad debts are all paid,—maintain an attitude of cold and severe disapproval of the offender, which, according to the analogies, need never change into anything even approximating affection, when "the great transaction's done." But the kernel of the Christian revelation of God, is love. Only that process of readjustment between man and God which is rooted in love, can be true. The monarchical, the juridical, the commercial, are strong in logic, but weak in love. They are therefore totally inadequate. But the domestic, or paternal is, by the nature of the case, a love relation. It comes closer, on the whole, to account satisfactorily for the way that Christ re-establishes harmony, than any other. Only when the father enters into the suffering of the son, and is cut to the quick by the same blade of transgression which has wounded the soul of the sinner, is the latter brought to see the true meaning of his sin. No forensic, artificial, or logically fabricated edifice of a coldly calculated

substitutionary atonement can permanently chasten and regenerate the perverted mind of the world. God will still be excommunicant. Christ will still be the innocent victim of outraged divine dignity. The character of the Deity will still suffer by contrast with the best of human parenthood. The human analogy of personal contact between father and son, and forgiveness on the condition of repentance, will annihilate that scheme of salvation which makes it impossible for God to do what he would like to do, unless Jesus does something first; and bases forgiveness, not upon personal contrition alone, but also upon the intellectual acceptance by the sinner of a divine scrapegoat upon whom all the sins of all time have been heaped.

No explanation of God is true which makes him less loving and merciful than the best of human fathers. No theory of God will work which excommunicates him as spiritual renewer and redeemer.

CHAPTER IV

THE USE AND MISUSE OF THE BIBLE

IT ought not to be necessary to spend time proving that the value of an instrument depends altogether upon the use which is made of it. A sulphur match may kindle a fire which will warm back to life and service a freezing saint of God; or it may start a conflagration which will lay waste a city and burn to death scores of people.

When we approach the Bible, the trouble with many is that they refuse to accept the premise that the book is a mere vehicle of truth. To them it is truth itself, and as such, like a potent charm, it simply needs to be applied in order to produce miraculous results. The difficulty with this position is that in order to hold it, one must be mole-blind to facts. Intellectual honesty inevitably will compel one to abandon this thesis.

There are three assumptions which absolutely vitiate any defensible attitude toward the Scriptures, and which the religion of the twentieth century must destroy root and branch.

I. *The Bible is a Book of Equal Moral and*

Religious Authority Throughout. As a matter of fact, we are dealing with a literature which reflects the spiritual culture of many ages. There is no unity or homogeneity in it. There are contradictions, discrepancies, irreconcilables in it. Jephtha keeps a holy vow and slays his daughter. But a prophet, centuries later, declares that a man "shall not give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul," and that what God desires is justice, mercy and a humble demeanor before him. Jacob and David, exiled from home, are convinced that they are leaving God behind them as well, and going out to lands ruled by other deities. But a Psalmist asks the rhetorical question, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" An ancient law declared that God "visited the sins of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." But a later Hebrew teacher flatly contradicted this when he asserted, "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." The Jewish historian records that when David took a census of the people, he was tempted of God; a later chronicler, in the interest of orthodox theology, modifies this by making Satan, not the deity, the tempter. The wholesale murders of Jehu, in ridding the earth of the dynasty of Omri, were

approved by God, according to the writer of Kings; but later prophets unsparingly denounced Jehu, and attributed the current national disasters to God's judgment because of those crimes. In the earliest times, God was worshiped under different names at many local shrines; then worship was centralized at Jerusalem, and shrine worship was forbidden; finally Jesus announced that "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the father," thus making religion ubiquitous.

Accordingly, there are very different levels of ethical and religious ideas in Scripture. Its literature ranges from ruthless injunctions of indiscriminate slaughter of enemies, to God-like mandates to love and forgive one's foes. Guilty and innocent are involved in punishment. Slavery, concubinage, drunkenness, blood revenge, lust, and murder not only find place in its pages, but if not tacitly defended, are only mildly rebuked. Compare with these the noblest utterances of the great prophets and Jesus, touching cleanness of heart, fidelity, chastity, forgiveness, and magnanimity, and it will be perceived how utterly impossible it is to defend the premise that the Bible is of equal moral and spiritual value and authority throughout.

II. *A Book, All Parts of which Apply to Us.* This second position of those who misuse the

Bible is equally demoralizing. As a matter of fact, each man who put pen to parchment wrote with an absorbing interest in the events of his own day and people. There is no shadow of justification in the belief that they expected eternity to be upon their productions. Much of what they discussed had no existence beyond the hour in which these men lived. But the allegorizing and "proof-text" habits of grubbing, sophomoric interpreters, have vitiated sound Biblical truth, lo, these many years. Out of the arsenal of Scripture, men have brought clumsy, archaic, and utterly useless weapons for the slaughter of the hosts of righteousness, or the defense of citadels of immorality. Polygamy has been approved because Abraham and David divided their connubial affections among several wives. Witches were burned in New England and authority therefore was drawn from the impregnable rock of Scripture, which declares, "Suffer not a witch to live." Negro slavery based its claim upon the curse of God pronounced upon Ham. The moderate drinker refers you convincingly to Paul's kindly suggestion to Timothy that he "take a little wine for his stomach's sake." The militarist knows that he is Christian because the Master said, "I came not to send peace but a sword." And the pacifist retorts that he is equally Christian because of the Lord's injunction to turn the other cheek when smitten.

Tyrants always have attempted to crush movements for freedom by quoting Paul's word, "Let every soul be in subjection unto the higher powers, for the powers that be are ordained of God", and the same great Apostle is made sponsor for the theory of the subordination of woman, because he once said, "the husband is the head of the wife".

If the Bible ever anywhere claimed for itself that it applied with equal validity to all ages and social conditions, there might be some reason for the misuse to which it has been put. But it makes no such claim. It is not like one of those slot machines into which a coin may be slipped and from which a card may be extracted, telling one his fortune, giving him his weight, and in general answering the dearest question of his heart. On the contrary, every Bible verse must be read in the light of its context, the stage of religious development reached at the time it was written; the national hope, glory, fear, or danger which inspired the author; the temperamental prejudices which possessed him; and the mental and moral limitations under which he labored. It is probable that not one word in a thousand in the Old Testament and scarcely a quarter of the New Testament were penned with the remotest idea that future generations would ever appeal to them as authoritative.

III. *A Book which Contains All of God's*

Revelation. Nothing really has damaged the Bible more than this baseless assumption. It has caused the long and bootless and quite disgraceful war with science. It has alienated multitudes of reverent, truth-loving people from it because it has seemed to arrogate to itself unwarranted omniscience. It has retarded the growth of an intelligent ministry by casting suspicion upon scholarship. It has perpetuated that baneful distinction between the sacred and the secular. It has put a time-limit upon the revelatory powers of the Almighty. It has made a literature of religious feeling into an official and infallible textbook on biology, geology, anthropology, sociology and many other cognate sciences. It has imprisoned the free spirit of the Christian religion within the lids of the Bible and has refused to permit it to step one foot outside. It has erected a dogma of inspiration which has excommunicated from religious literature much of genuine spiritual value. It is utterly indefensible on any and every ground. Even the Psalmist recognized that the Scriptures did not contain all the truth about God. "The heavens declare the glory of God. . . . Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?" The flower in the crannied wall, the fossil in the buried rock, the tidal wave of racial immigration, and the faith in the heart of a child, all reveal God. The Almighty was not

struck dumb when the canon of the New Testament was closed. Paul enjoyed the confidence of God no more than many another later Christian Apostle. The greatest prophecy of the book itself is that "when the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth." The splendid experiences which God has vouchsafed to his prophets and chosen people are to be enriched and amplified by what his universe of mind and matter reveals to-day.

In the right use of the Bible there must be the exercise of:

1. *Selection.* There is more in the Bible than we need. Only the antiquarian, theologian, student of comparative religions, literary critic and preacher have use for the Bible from cover to cover. As a matter of fact, we have a little Bible within the big Bible. Instinctively we select and discriminate in our reading of the Book. We prefer *John* to *Judges, Luke* to *Chronicles, Psalms* to *Esther,* and *Isaiah* to *Numbers.* Thus we really are doing what the old ecumenical councils did: we are making for ourselves the canon of Scriptures. This habit is a sound one. It arises from the instinct that the measure of the Bible's value for us is its power to unlock the mind, warm the heart, quicken the conscience, and train the will. Not the canonicity of a book makes it meaningful, but its content.

The question is not who made it for me, but what does it make out of me? Not "was somebody else inspired who wrote it?" but, "am I inspired when I read it?" Answering these questions honestly, we are led to seek our spiritual nourishment here and there within the Book, not impartially everywhere from cover to cover.

2. *Reason.* The time has passed when we are afraid to "prove all things" that we may "hold fast that which is good." Submitting truth to the test of reason will only establish the truth, for truth *is* reasonable. We have "a reasonable faith and a reasonable service." The evidence of reasonableness is the total affirmative response of the entire man. Does a certain belief awaken the favorable answer of thought and feeling and intuition and will, all blended and merged? Does it mobilize all the forces of personality? Does it evoke the assent of the deepest voice within? If it does, it is a reasonable belief. But if there still be doubt, the questioned belief may be put to the test of value-producing power. A reasonable economics is one which is of value to civil government; a reasonable therapeutics is one which will cure the sick; a reasonable educational system is one which really educates; and a reasonable religion is one which produces character. Reason is the handmaid of faith, not its assassin. It is reasonable for a man to believe in an orderly uni-

verse, a benevolent Deity, a continuance of personality after death, an optimistic view of life, the love of his mother and the fidelity of his child. The broadest, fairest, best-tested view of existence will verify these affirmations. The deepest and best within him assents to these proposals; and living by virtue of their grace makes for a coherent and value-full universe.

When we approach the Bible, we do so as rational beings. Much within its pages neither evokes the total favorable response of personality, nor, tested by experience, makes for life value. Such parts, a reasonable faith would reject. But much of it is as "deep calling unto deep." It awakens the dormant spirit of man, meets his moral and spiritual needs, creates character when given free course in him, and becomes for him a reasonable setting-forth of divine truth. The authority of the Bible resides only in such portions as call forth this total affirmative response of man's personality. A mere *ipse dixit* may compel obedience, but it will not carry conviction, unless its reasonableness is recognized.

The fact of the matter is that the authority of truth rests upon the capacity of man to assimilate it. The Bible has been master of men because it has said so many things which man's soul has been fitted to appropriate. There has been no coercion in the real process of achieving supremacy. The

authority of the Bible does not depend upon any claims to infallibility, upon any dogma of inspiration. Rather it rests upon the fact that "man is incurably religious", and setting forth the things of religion, it awakens the spontaneous "amen" in the soul of man. When God's will is written upon the pages of a book, it finds itself duplicated upon the tables of men's hearts, and in this fact resides its authority. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it." If there were no counterpart of the divine within us, to react to the divine without us, the sound of the latter would be as clanging brass and tinkling cymbals!

3. *A Christian Spirit.* A chain may be no stronger than its weakest link; but the Bible is as strong as its strongest part. And that part is the Christian part. The presence of Christ in the Bible is the supreme fact. It might be said to be the only important fact. Every inconsistency should be interpreted by the rule of the higher, not lower, revelation; every contradiction should be resolved in the light of the Christian, not pre-Christian or non-Christian ideal. Much in the Old Testament is of value, even though it is not distinctly in accord with the highest ethical standards, because it provides a strong background from which the great picture of the religion of the spirit in Jesus Christ stands forth in heroic proportions.

It gives us an insight into the habits of mind of the forbears of our Christian faith, and supplies us with the grace of sympathy. It indicates the continuity of that growth of religious life which the Jews, in common with all other races, shared. It thus commends the whole process of development in spiritual culture as something more than national, and links the inner life of many peoples together.

But to-day, we are not under law, but grace. Christ, not Moses, is the genius of the Bible. It is his spirit which is to be our criterion and none other. We may gain a vivid total impression of Jesus. About the salient points in his character we may agree. We may come to view life "under the Christ aspect." When we have done all this, let that Christ ideal govern our Scriptural interpretation, correcting all which is both immature and unworthy. "If Paul had been told that he would be talked of as of equal authority with the Lord, he would have burned his letters," pungently remarks the late Professor Clarke. And Paul would be anathema in his own eyes, were he asked to substitute, for twentieth century America, his own strongly marked Jewish interpretation of Jesus.

We may rest secure, then, upon the hidden and enduring spiritual foundations of Scripture. We know what God has revealed, because God has

gifted us with the faculty whereby we recognize it. We may leave the theme, using the noble words of Sabatier:

"It is not because the Christian religion is in the Bible that it is true. It is because it is in itself true that when you find it in the Bible you say that the Bible teaches the truth."

CHAPTER V

THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

ONE of the most sublime and unruffled confidences of Jesus was that goodness could not only take care of itself, but at the same time make more goodness. The leaven might lose its identity, but in the process it vitalized the dead dough. The seed might be disintegrated in the soil, but from it came a whole tree full of more seeds. The talent might disappear in trade, but from the transaction there would result two, five, or ten more talents. The strong man fully armed can not only keep his own goods in safety, but he can, by defeating the marauder, make the safety of the goods of the public more sure. The light on the lampstand not only shines itself, but it makes dark corners bright; the salt not only has savor in itself, but it preserves that with which it comes in contact. In a multitude of ways Jesus illustrates this truth: that goodness can not only keep itself intact, but can, by contagion, make its environing envelop good as well. Bushnell uses a quaint phrase to express this truth. "The church

is to possess the world by the outpopulating power of the Christian stock." There is virtue enough in Christian people not only to preserve them from being spoiled from contact with evil, but also, and more, to make them reproduce goodness by contagion.

But in many quarters and for many generations a contrary view has prevailed. Goodness' chief business was to quarantine itself against the devilishness of the world. The church was an ark of safety, a city of refuge, a strong fortress of defense against the spiritual hosts of wickedness. Thus the church became the official patron and custodian of goodness, which was to be preserved only by keeping its skirts clear of the contaminating influence of evil.

On the other hand, the viewpoint of Jesus would indicate that goodness is a therapeutic to be applied to social disease, an antiseptic to arrest moral putrefaction, a prophylactic to destroy the bacteria of sin, a leaven to vitalize the lump of society, a healthy atmosphere breathing through the miasma of the world, a spiritual free trade, penetrating every portion of the habitable globe. The one absolutely essential factor in the relation between goodness and evil, is unhindered intercourse between the two. Goodness is for the purpose of world sanitation. It is to establish a moral hygiene. It is to save the world by becoming a

part of it.

Two considerations are before us.

I. *The True Alignment.* What this is has been hinted already. Not a concrete unified, spiritually superior organization known as the "church", versus an unregenerate, heterogeneous and immoral mass outside, known as the "world". Rather it is the spirit of love and helpfulness under the direction of Christ, versus the spirit of hate and selfishness in despite of Christ. The "world", as has been aptly observed, is "society organized apart from God". There are not two hemispheres, one of which is inhabited by good and is called "the church", and the other of which is inhabited by evil and is called "the world". George Bernard Shaw, in a preface to one of his plays, pungently has put the case. "The first common mistake to get rid of is that mankind consists of a great mass of religious people, and a few eccentric atheists. It consists of a huge mass of worldly people and a small percentage of persons deeply interested in religion and concerned about their own souls and other people's. We pass our lives among people who, whatever creeds they may repeat, and in whatever temples they may avouch their respectability and wear their Sunday clothes, have robust consciences, and hunger and thirst, not after righteousness, but for rich feeding and comfort and social position and attractive mates

and ease and respect and consideration; in short for love and money."

It is to be feared that Shaw has only too justly caricatured the church here. But he has done us this service, that he cynically has called our attention to the fact that the true alignment is not between an organization known as "the church" and all outside, known popularly as "the world, the flesh and the devil". Rather, let it be repeated the struggle is ever between the incarnate spirit of love and service under the direction of Christ, wherever manifest; and the incarnate spirit of hate and selfishness in despite of Christ, wherever manifest. In the words of Graham Taylor: "The world can no longer be considered as a sphere of human life separate from or antagonistic to the church. Too much religion has gotten out of the church into the world to allow us to think of all the good being in the church, and the world as being nothing but evil."

The religion of the twentieth century will insist, as never before, that he who is not against Christ is for him; and that by a man's fruits shall he be known. On the other hand, it will have stern words for those who cry "We be Abraham's seed", and do not the works of Abraham, resting their hope upon the dead merits of a spiritual pedigree, rather than upon the quick virtue of a righteous performance. The spirit of "the world"

must be exorcised from the church, and the spirit of the Christ must be recognized in the world, before the Kingdom in its right proportions can be defined. For the Kingdom is greater than the church, and its citizens are found without the church. Either the church must expand and take in the Kingdom, or the Kingdom will come into its own without the church. If there are all too many who cry "Lord, Lord," and do not the works of their Father, there are a growing host who, without spiritual banner, sign or symbol, practise the deeds of Christ. Of whom it may once again be said, "They are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven."

After the true alignment, comes:

II. *The True Task.* Goodness is inherently stronger than evil. There is in it the germ of a spiritual contagion. It is more than the possession of a defensive armor. It is more than having a stoutness and robustness of character sufficient to withstand malign forces. Goodness has reproductive as well as self-defensive powers. It is dynamic, not static. It is not a monk; it is a crusader. Confronted with specific evil, goodness alike preserves itself and destroys its foe by contact with the world, not by withdrawal from it. Almost it might be said that the only hope for improving the health of goodness, is its stern struggle with evil.

The practical way in which the religion of the twentieth century is going to deal with evil is not far to seek. There are some forms of human activity which, by common consent, are perceived to have such a preponderating weight of unadulterated evil, that, like a thoroughly rotten fruit, there is no hope to save them. Enlightened sentiment, under moral tutelage, has relegated them to the scrapheap. Such are legalized prostitution, state-protected liquor traffic, state-maintained lotteries, chattel slavery, and piracy on the high seas. But other forms of activity are evil in their operation only because a certain modicum of taint or poison inheres in them. Through abuse of the principle of moderation or through association with forces themselves irredeemable, these activities which are not intrinsically demoralizing, have become socially indefensible. Obviously the task of Christianity is to strain off the virus, leaving the sound body. It is common to say that certain amusements "leave a bad taste in your mouth." Walt Mason, the preacher with the biggest American audience, has put it thus:

"And every time you see a play
And read a book that makes a jest
Of love or home, you throw away
Some part of you that is the best."

Some forms of business have been so dragged in the mire that a self-respecting man finds it hard to engage in them. Among the ancients, politics used to be an honorable profession, but "professional politician" to-day carries with it an uncoveted stigma. The promoting of amusement parks, seaside resorts, race-tracks and theatres has resulted often in hoodlumism, gambling, and general looseness of living. A very large number of social activities are in the main innocuous, but handled improperly they become demoralized and demoralizing. The good in them really more than counterbalances the evil. Yet because the vicious is present, they become a social menace.

There are two ways in which decent, clean-minded, and high-idealed people treat these so-called "questionable" things. One class, regarding them as hopelessly irredeemable, taboos them *in toto*. With a quite characteristic interpretation of Scripture to suit their own views, they uphold their action by the Pauline words, "touch not, taste not, handle not." They believe that the world will never be safe for righteousness until these moot forms of diversion are relegated to the limbo of Satan, where by nature they belong. This class of people may not be numerically strong, but in the counsels of the theology of orthodoxy they are imposingly influential. The other class will avow frankly that they have a lik-

ing for the "best" of these tabood amusements. They patronize the movies with wise discrimination; they attend their children to their school dances; they spend an evening with cards now and then in the company of friends. The difference between these two attitudes of mind is more than a superficial one. It strikes to the very root of Christian faith. It is the difference between renouncing the world and redeeming it, between discarding the dough and leavening it, between the asceticism of the monk and the evangelism of Christ. The former view confesses the impotency of Christianity to transform society; the latter view holds that Christianity is meant to substitute good for evil by fearless contact, the one with the other. In every community there is needed an association of friends of normal, wholesome life, who shall let it be known that they will vigorously and sympathetically support all forms of amusement which appeal to the fine, true, healthy manly and womanly qualities in people; which promote sane, sound and essentially optimistic attitudes toward life; which are not socially disruptive, debasing or demoralizing. The proprietors and promoters of all such forms of diversion will be quick to note the increased patronage when the bill of fare which they offer is not only palatable, but wholesome.

The secret of safety is not separation, but con-

secration. The religion of the twentieth century will hold as one of its cardinal principles, that the possession of a passion for God will make men not only immune from evil, but creative of good. To be in the world but not of it, is the business of Christ's followers. In the words of the late Maltbie Babcock, "We cannot know or enjoy or love the world too much, if God's will controls us. . . . Worldliness is not the love of the world, but slavishness to it."

CHAPTER VI

TIMES, SACRAMENTS AND THE MAN

PERHAPS the most fascinating study for the student of Christian origins, is that which pertains to those venerable and well-established institutions known as Sabbath observance, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Because when the student has penetrated a little below the surface in his investigations, he will discover that the roots of these customs run down into pre-Christian paganism. It will appear to him, therefore, that what Christianity has done with them, has been to adapt them to Christian thought, reinterpret them in the light of Christian ideals, and reinvest them with truer spiritual meaning. The Græco-Roman world possessed its altars, temples, festival days, mystic rites and sacerdotal ceremonies. And when the Christian dynamic moved paganism from its foundation, it did not annihilate so much as it assimilated. It took the days and places and cults and gave them different content and significance.

Jesus himself formally established neither the Sabbath nor the sacraments. The former was a

Jewish religious festival, firmly established in the nation through contact with Babylonian heathendom. The latter were developed out of Greek and Jewish rites. Early Christian usage transferred the sanctity from Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, to Sunday, the Christian day commemorative of the resurrection. As such it has continued to be regarded with especial favor and partiality. Jesus did not baptize nor did he include that function in the first and greatest commission which He gave to His followers when He told them to "preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.'" No subsequent commission carries the unquestioned textual authenticity that this does, nor in the slightest degree weakens nor invalidates the force of these injunctions. The last and popularly called "great commission" recorded in the two closing verses of Matthew's gospel quite justly is open to the imputation of pseudonymity, since the disciples, in their earliest labors, followed a policy directly contradictory to that of "evangelizing all nations" and using the Trinitarian formula in baptism. This fact, that the primitive church never dreamed of world-wide missionary effort, and initiated its converts through the mystic use of the name of Jesus Christ, and not that of the Trinity, militates finally against the genuineness of the Matthew commis-

sion. It is not for one moment to be believed that had the eleven really received this solemn and final charge, they would have so totally ignored it as the record in *Acts* indicates they did. It is common knowledge that, far from considering the Greek world as equally heir of the gospel, all of the disciples up to Paul strenuously fought the propaganda of "proselyting all nations," regarding Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and the promises of the Kingdom limited to the Hebrew race. And touching the baptismal formula, the thought was always Christocentric, as the reiterated phrase "baptize into the name of Jesus Christ" indicates.

There is likewise strong critical evidence that when Jesus partook of the final passover with his disciples, and added the touching symbol of the bread and the wine, he was not instituting a new sacrament for perpetual observance. Rather did he wish that whenever his friends lifted the broken bread and the red wine to their lips, they should lovingly think of him. "This do in remembrance of me. . . . As oft as ye do this, ye do show forth [i. e. testify to] the Lord's death till he come." To the pious Jew, every meal was sacramental, for there in spirit Jehovah met with him, and Jesus desired his disciples symbolically to feast with him in like manner. The primitive church made the Eucharist a part of the common

meal and never formally and officially set it aside by a ritual or sacramental name.

The derivation of these three Christian institutions—the so-called "Sabbath," the rite of baptism and the communion of the Lord's Supper—has been dwelt upon at length for this purpose, to point out how free the apostolic church was in adapting old customs to present needs. The supreme demand was for vehicles of thought and feeling adequate to convey spiritual truth. The Sabbath, baptism and the Supper were to be transparent media, through which the grace of God was to shine upon his children. If, in the changing circumstances of time and place, these media became inadequate to perform that function, it certainly would be the part of common sense to modify them until they again could accomplish the task for which they were devised. The house in which one lives is the same house the year round. But in summer it answers the purpose of keeping one cool; in winter it answers the opposite purpose of keeping one warm. Once, men scratched the ground with a pointed stick; now they tear it deep with a plow. Their object is the same in both cases. Thus in the matter of the institutions and sacraments of Christian faith, the great principle is that of accommodation, making the means adequate and efficient to produce the end.

Take the Sabbath first. The classic and all-

sufficient word of Jesus is "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." A correct understanding of the latter phrase will throw much light on the whole question. Jesus spoke in Aramaic, the popular dialect of the Jews. And in this tongue, the expression "son of" commonly meant a single, individual member of a generic group of things. Thus the above-quoted phrase may well mean, "each man is Lord of the Sabbath,"—a quite natural conclusion from the declaration that "the Sabbath was made for man."

The kernel, therefore, of this logion of Jesus about the Sabbath, is that the day, as an institution, is a means to an end. The complete welfare of man is that end. If the Sabbath, as an observed institution, truly ministers to the all-round good of man, it should be preserved. If it does not, it must be modified or abandoned. Now our trouble to-day is this: we do not so much abuse the Sabbath as we abuse man. We place a low, cheap, and unworthy value upon him, and then modify all our Sabbath usages to meet this new demand, justifying our procedure by the declaration that we are thus making man "lord of the Sabbath." But we grossly slander man when we map out his regeneration by means of a program of more amusement, warmer clothes, better food and greater leisure,—and stop there. When we

do this, it is inevitable that "Sabbatarianism" appears as a check in our effort to reform men in this material way. So we exultantly quote Jesus' words about "the Sabbath being made for man," and sweep aside all the conventions as being prudish, "Puritanical" and out of date. It would be well for us to remember that we never shall do justice either to God or man, until we estimate man at his highest value. So long as we take materialistic and "pleasure" views of life, and try to fit man, the "noblest work of God," into such a petty scheme, just so long shall we degrade man and misunderstand God's purpose for him. What are life's supremest values? Fun, food, money, might? If we are after these, we shall have no use at all for any kind of an institution called the "Sabbath." But if honor, truth, sympathy, love really make men, then the influences of Sunday as a day apart from other days are needful in his life. If we think of man as Christ thought of him, we shall try to conserve in him those traits which mark him as different from the animals. If the Sabbath laws help to do this, we shall keep them; if they do not, we shall discard them. This cuts both deep and wide. If Sabbatarianism works for the physical, mental, moral, social, and spiritual uplift of the modern man, the religion of the twentieth century endorses it. But there can be no inflexible rule for all. What

fits one community may not fit another. Men who rot in slums, who feed machines, who are bound to the stupifying treadmill of monotonous manual toil, need a kind of rejuvenation and revitalizing on Sunday that most others do not. "Sabbatarianism," as commonly understood, would be a millstone about the neck of the industrial classes. To run everybody through the same mould of Sabbath legislation would be as stupid, disastrous, and wicked as it would be to establish a national compulsory bill of fare, irrespective of the ages, temperaments, appetites and physical peculiarities of the one hundred and more million people of this country. We should eat food to sustain life, and we should observe Sunday for the same reason. When we take an eternally worthwhile view of life, we shall know how to nourish ourselves on Sunday as well as on every other day.

In like manner, we shall regard the sacraments as binding and indispensable, only as they effectually teach certain great and deathless truths to heart and mind. Baptism is in itself nothing. Jesus never made it a means of salvation. It may have absolutely no illuminating or instructing power for a not inconsiderable number of people who are so constituted as not to need the help of symbol or object-lesson in order to assimilate truth. In either form, immersion or sprinkling, the baptismal formula impresses the twofold truth

of a cleansed past and a spirit-filled future. "As in a figure" the recipient of the rite sees his sins washed away and is assured of the incoming grace of God. To many, this sacrament is truly a "means of grace." The reality of God's forgiveness and re-enforcing power becomes vital and concrete through the act of immersion or sprinkling. But to many others it adds nothing to the experience which is already theirs. They have felt the cleansing effect of God's love; they are convinced that God is in them, "the hope of glory." The rite of baptism, therefore, neither adds to the solemn joy of an experienced new birth, nor detracts from it. To the sacrament they passively submit, as a conventional formula. Others there are, and they are a growing number, who actually resent the imputation that any form, symbol, or sacrament is needed when they have come to realize that they are God's children and the recipients of his favor.

The question, therefore, becomes an insistent one: in view of the variety of honestly differing opinion, and bearing in mind the original failure of Jesus to inaugurate this rite and the impossibility of insisting upon this symbol as an indispensable means of salvation, can the religion of the twentieth century continue to make baptism a universal and compulsory method of initiation into the realm of God? If what has been above con-

tended is true, then we may be confident that if and when men come to experience vitally the cleansing power of God's love and forgivness, and the quickening effect of his continued presence within their hearts,—the twofold truth which is symbolized by the rite of baptism,—they will be found more and more generally discarding the sacrament while exalting the truth.

The same line of argument holds for the sacrament of the Supper, with this difference. Whereas it must inevitably fall into disuse as a mystic means whereby God's grace is conferred upon the believer, it will persist and grow in meaning as a memorial or fellowship meal. Baptism is an act quite foreign to our normal living, but men will continue to break bread and take the cup so long as life shall last. It is therefore quite possible to stress the sacrament of the Supper, as it is not possible to exalt that of baptism. Only in doing the former, the twentieth century religion, mindful of the symbolic nature of the rite, will more and more insist that the whole occasion be one in which the same kind of spiritual fellowship with Christ be recognized, as men recognize with one another when they eat and drink in love and helpfulness. As an essential, indispensable, and officially established means of salvation, the Supper never can hold the hearts and minds of modern men. As a touching reminder and symbol of

that larger fellowship of men with men, and men with God, it will continue to make its appeal.

The world is hungry, not for signs and symbols, but for truth and reality. We are to be "transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God"; we are to bring it to pass that "Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith . . . that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." Do the sacraments efficiently minister to this end? If they do, we shall hold them; if they do not, they must go.

CHAPTER VII

JUST BEING GOOD

IT is significant that when Jesus desired to show the real connection between religion and morals, he quoted an Old Testament prophet. He was being criticized harshly for the infraction of the caste system which decreed that pious religionists should not break bread at the same table with the non-conformists and unorthodox. In reply to his detractors, Jesus called their attention to the fact that they did not know what religion in its essence was, if they could pursue such practices. Fellowship, kindly consideration and comradeship are of infinitely more worth than ritual and sacrament. Out of the mouth of their own revered prophet would he confute them. "Go," said he, "and get truly acquainted with the meaning of this word—'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' "

Not from the prophets had the Pharisees drawn their sanction for the violent and unnatural divorcing of morals from worship. From Elijah even unto Malachi the burden of the prophetic message was the abhorrence of Almighty God for

any ritual that was not productive of justice, mercy, and truth. In this respect, Jesus simply reiterated with a supreme emphasis the sermon messages of these ancient preachers of social righteousness. In the mind of Jesus, religion and morality were absolutely inseparable. They were like the tree and the fruit which it bears; like the thought and the word which springs to the lips to express it; like the music in the heart of the composer and the song which he sings for the world; like the mother's love and the tender care which that love inspires. Devotion, worship, love, loyalty, faith,—these are the ingredients of a religion that is imperishable. Justice, mercy, service, goodness,—these are the moral fruits of such a religion. From the days of the prophets even until now religion has been done to death in the house of its friends, who have not hesitated to recommend, by precept and example, a course of life based upon cultus, ritual, and ceremony alone. As a result there has been a vast deal of altogether superfluous sneering at "mere morality" on the part of those professing to be "religious." Youth have been warned solemnly that "morality alone cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." Blameless characters outside the church have been held up as fearful examples of the unworthy end of non-Christians. To such an extreme has this been carried that literature has

freely caricatured the man of religious pretensions devoid of moral actions, and it has besmirched the fair name of morality by calling such a man "moral" when as a matter of fact he was neither religious nor moral.

Hence there has arisen the startlingly unchristian assumption, that good as a man may be, if he is not religious there is something the matter with him. By a curious perverseness of reasoning it has been believed that an impeccable character is something to be rather ashamed of if its possessor can not show a card of membership in an evangelical church.

Leaving for the time being all further discussion of the relation between religion and ethics, let us ask this question: "Who is the good man?" If we are able to answer this query, it will be easier to show how morals are grounded in faith. Nothing will throw more light upon this matter than the temper and attitude of Jesus. Whatever else he was, he was supremely good. He demonstrated this goodness, for one thing, by:

I. *Altruistic Attentiveness.* He was sensitive to a vaster world than his fellows were. The circle of his interests included infinite dimensions. His relation to life was wide-eyed and far-sighted. He answered a cosmic, not a local appeal. In it all, his position was uprightly and downrightly unselfish. We absolve him from any and every

mercenary end. His awareness of the universe was not that he might make the universe serve his ambitions. His one injunction, "love thy neighbor as thyself," when interpreted by his life, summed up this characteristic of disinterested vision. For necessity, not propinquity, is the condition of "neighborness." To know this need, wherever around the world it may be, and to know it to alleviate it, is altruistic attentiveness, the first requisite of goodness.

This, it should be noted, is exactly opposed to the motive and conduct of the Cæsars, Napoleons, and Kaisers. Their view, to be sure, is world-wide. Their circle of interests takes in all nations. They concern themselves with the affairs of mankind. They are aware of the gigantic proportions of human relations, and project their plans upon great canvases. But the sole aim and end of their prodigious adventures, is egotistic, not altruistic. Personal glory and aggrandizement is the sum of their efforts. The world is to be their football, with the goal posts directly ahead, and their toe at the leather. They scorn small views, but think in world terms only to loot the world.

Others there be who, eschewing narrow outlooks on life, plan to accomplish heroic things for a small and select circle of friends. These men are sometimes called patriots, because they aim to

exalt their country and their countrymen. But in doing so, they are willing to trample upon the rights of other states and races. They are wide-eyed not for selfish reasons, perhaps, but surely not for broadly altruistic reasons. They would have their interests and those of their fellow citizens triumph at the expense of the rest of the world. None of these men can be convicted of a lack of attention to the world about them. The difference between them and the good man is this: that the former acquaint themselves with the world to consume the world, and the latter, to uplift the world.

This indicates the criterion whereby we judge of a man's "public spirit." Without this admirable personal characteristic, a man thinks in a small circle, is aware of a limited world, or else, conceiving of life in large dimensions, puts himself, like a spider in his web, at the centre of the whole scheme. But possessing public spirit, he is first convinced of the fact that his fellow citizens are interesting people, their occupations, recreations and careers in general are as vital to the community as his own, and their rights to be as firmly respected as he would have others respect his. He is thus a man of more than one idea, who includes humanity in the field of his interesting review, and who believes that his own life is worth nothing if not a part of the larger world-

whole.

Another characteristic of the good man is:

II. *Absolute World-Sensitiveness.* He is touched with the feelings of the world's infirmities. The pain of all mankind is his pain, and the joy of all mankind is his joy. Jesus gazes at Jerusalem and weeps the bitterest tears ever shed from mortal eyes. Why? Because it is the city which is soon to take his life? No. Because it is callous to God and deaf to righteousness. Savonarola agonizes over Florence. Why? Because it is preparing the faggots and stake and torch for him? No. Because it has returned to its vanities and sensualities, like a dog to its vomit. Francis of Assisi breaks his heart over the monks of his new order. Why? Because they turned their backs on that which was dear to him? No. Because they have forsaken the Christ for wealth and honor and power. Why should Jesus concern himself about the fate of Jerusalem? Why should Savonarola be troubled about licentious Florence? Why should Francis mourn for weak Italian monks? They were responsible for none of these evils. They had tried to avert them. Why not wash their hands, Pilate-wise, of the whole transaction? Why worry when one is not blameworthy? Enough for a man to feel remorse for his own delinquencies, without adding superfluous misery for misdoings which cannot

be charged against him! In short: why expect that in the domain of moral evil a man should feel sorrow for that which he neither commits himself nor for which he is in the slightest degree responsible? The world would be a good bit nearer the millennium if every culpable man and woman in it recognized his and her culpability and tried to atone for it.

But it is right at this point that the truly good advances beyond the merely respectable. It is not enough to mourn for your own sins and make atonement for your own transgressions. Not thus will the eternal realm of God come. Respectability owns to its faults when it has been convinced of them, and seriously attempts rectification. But goodness feels pain for the faults of others, for which it is not in the slightest degree responsible, and disinterestedly tries to restore the sinner. It is just this extra sensitiveness to the sin of the world that marks the good man. No man is really moral who does not feel some of the pain of the evil and sting of the sin which has never come nigh him and which he never has committed.

This is vicariousness. It is the capacity to enter into the world woe arising from world sin, with the end of promoting world righteousness. It is the real, poignant agony of good men and women everywhere to-day. The divine power to

feel the tragedy of life, from which one is personally immune,—this it is upon which the hope of the world rests. In this sense Jesus "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." In this sense "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." And in that same sense the good man carries the cross of the world to-day. Too often the malefactor is callous to his own sin; he is indifferent to the wreck and misery which it causes. Who feels the pain the deepest? The one who is free from all blame and removed from all the direct consequences,—the good man. The crime of the city rises as a reek to heaven, and who wears out the night watches in prayer and fasting and the day season in hoping and planning for cleaner things? The men and women who have not stained the fair name of the city nor turned it into the way of death. Why should they distress themselves? There are no painful consequences which they should fear from the hand of the law. They are innocent of great transgression. They are even sure of escaping the misery and material loss which follows in the train of civic misdeeds. But their passion for civic righteousness is so consuming that even though they are themselves blameless and immune from the disastrous consequences, they cry over the disgrace of their city with a great and bitter cry. A morality which

cannot shake a man out of his own smug immaculateness and complacent respectability is as dead as the mummy of Pharaoh. The good man loves goodness so much that it is as a sword piercing his heart to see it scorned anywhere. He is crucified afresh to save the world. He would lay down his life to lift up the ideal.

A third and final trait of the good man is:

III. *Creative Social-Mindedness.* Note what this ideal follower of morality has done. First, he has broadened the domain of his observation until it includes all humanity, and in his observation of men and manners he is actuated by good-will and magnanimous interest. Second, he not only feels a sensitiveness to wrong for which he is responsible, but a pain for the tragic consequences of others' misdeeds, from the inconveniences or misfortunes of which he may be totally immune. But to altruistic attentiveness and absolute world-sensitiveness must be added a constructive faculty, that of creative social-mindedness. Viewing the world and feeling for the world from the most generous angle are not enough,—there must be action toward the ideal. The good man must take counsel with others of like disposition for the organization of righteousness, for the co-ordination of right thinking and feeling,—in short, for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

The age of an individualistic goodness is by.

There never was such a thing, although men thought there was. Mere decency and conventional respectability are content to keep the law, pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin and thank God that they are not as other men are. Such making broad of phylacteries and general apotheosis of Pharisaism will not save a man against the day of reckoning, neither will it build up a society that is worth the saving. No man can grow good alone. All goodness is social in its genesis or its exodus. So long as plums grow together on trees and men live together in society, so long will both plums and men ripen and rot collectively. Cashing in the remark, with a certain discount off when we remember the source, we may accept Shaw's words for what they are worth, that "a man who is better than his fellows is a nuisance." Surely a man who is devoid of creative social-mindedness, and solemnly labors to be good by himself in a corner, is at least an "undesirable citizen." But he who would surround the individual with the restraints and encouragements necessary for an organized, corporate, and collective righteousness, takes the final step in the pursuit of goodness. For he brings it into line with the processes of race and state and family development, which are in their essence and in their expression purely social.

The mainspring of such morality is religion.

However true it may be that the church and official Christianity are not indispensable for the creation and fostering of altruistic attentiveness, world-wide sensitiveness and purposeful social-mindedness, it cannot be maintained that these ethical ideals grow out of the air or out of the rock. They take root in the good ground, which is religion in its deepest and most far-reaching sense. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses to this truth, for wherever we find men and women laboring most sacrificingly and perseveringly for human welfare, we find men and women who believe that humanity has an eternally worth-while destiny. This is to believe in the permanence of the spiritual, which is essentially religion. Bald materialism and unblushing atheism do not supply a platform broad enough to support a thoroughgoing and consistent ethic. The social consciousness is possessed by those who know that God is, and that he is working out his eternal purposes in the stumbling pilgrimages of men, his children. The day is past when religion may say to ethics, "I will have none of thee," or when ethics may reply, "And I am not of thee." A faith in the divine order and the ultimate beneficent end of the universe, is a faith in God, and this faith it is which always has and always will nerve the arm of the moral man to service, and fill his heart with an unquenchable courage.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER

OFFICIAL Christianity has had its day. That which is to be will not need the sanction of established authority. It will be because it must be. It will be the renascence of that prophetic oracle,—"I will put my law in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it, saith the Lord." And it will be characterized broadly by the following traits.

I. *Democracy.* Now is the judgment of this world on autocracy. Now is the emancipation of the imprisoned spirit of democracy. The kingdoms of the world are becoming the commonwealths of the people. The twilight of the imperial gods is here. Into every department of life and thought is the spirit of democracy filtering. Can religion escape it? Not for long, else it will pass into that limbo of myth and fable reserved for the worn-out superstitions of inanimate races.

But some will say, "Religion is and always has been democratic." Unpatronized by kings

and unformulated by councils, this may be true. True religion "bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the voice thereof, but know not whence it cometh and whither it goeth." Religion in a dogmatic straight-jacket has been and is the religion with which the world is most familiar. Religion formulated, crystallized, conventionalized, hobbled by the weight of majority votes in ecumenical councils, dressed out in obsolete verbiage and pranked out in disproved philosophies,—this is standardized religion, which would bend the free human spirit to wear its inflexible yoke, and intended by God to be a moving river of truth, become instead a stagnant dead sea.

The undemocratic aspect of modern official Christianity is plainly noted in two directions: first, its creeds are rigid. Democracy demands that all forms of government, platforms of social relations, and expressions of faith, shall be flexible enough to accommodate themselves to genuine and vital changes in men. An unmodifiable creed is as monstrous an anomaly as an unmodifiable machine. As the hand-press of Gutenberg, with its rough wooden types, is related to the multiple Hoe press with its linotype auxiliary to-day,—so should the creeds of the time of Luther be to the creeds of the present. A most casual glance at ecclesiastical dogma will satisfy the most sanguine reformer that this is not so. Instead of being an

instrument to express thought, the official creed to-day is one which represses thought. It should be elastic, mobile, responsive to needs, sensitive to creative ideas. With every turn of the wheel of time, new aspects of God's truth are brought to view. Is a stereotyped creed adequate intellectually and emotionally to set forth this new aspect? With every wind which blows from overseas come tidings of triumphs of the democratic principle. Is an official creed competent to picture forth the new soul relations which those victories mean? Let any man, in his unsophisticated enthusiasm, attempt to mobilize the fixed creeds of Christendom in the interest of freshly discovered truth, and he will discover speedily how worse than vain are all his honest efforts. The unofficial and freely working thought-forms of the future, candidly reflecting the experience of the growing race, will be democratic in their spirit. They will be open to revision from below up, and not from above down. Prelates and potentates will listen when the people rise up to say what they have learned about God.

The second ground for a belief that official Christianity is not democratic, is the undeniable hostility of the proletariat toward it. A democrat will be quick to detect the spirit of democracy everywhere, and if he saw it in the orthodox creeds of the day, he would show his friendship

for them. It is a matter of common knowledge, however, that wherever two or three of the partisans of democracy are gathered together, there is no official creed of Christendom in their midst. In their planning for the ideal state, wherein dwelleth righteousness, these passionate souls can find no corner where they may set up an orthodox dogma. The man who toils with his hand looks upon official Christianity to-day, and asks why the men with whom he can have no truce until a better industrial order prevails, are all in the places of honor and responsibility within the sacred institution. This man who labors would worship God and serve him but finds no comfort in the forms which are the breath of life in the great churches about him. The simple fact that the mass of our church-membership is composed of the so-called middle class—the salaried, professional, and capital-owning classes—is an evidence that the original purpose of Christianity, which was a solvent of all ranks and artificial distinctions, has been rather lost sight of. Rightly or wrongly, the average unchurched workingman regards the doctrines of official Christianity as shrewd attempts to becloud the bread-and-butter issues of life by exalting the virtues of "other-worldliness" and inculcating the doubtful grace of meekness under present injustice. Religion thus is considered as a comfortable device to keep the

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poor man contented with his lot, while promising him a doubtful posthumous felicity. It is thus injurious to the framework of society by virtue of its platform of pure speculation and intangible rewards and punishments. Lulled to sleep by these poppied promises, and stranded upon the shore of the Lotus eaters, the proletariat may be regarded as safely disposed of while their hereditary antagonists, the employers and capitalists, pursue their predatory purposes, without molestation or indictment.

Untrue as this accusation against official Christianity may be, the very fact that it can be made with a certain plausible passion, proves that all is not as it should be with the orthodox creeds and their defenders. When once the latter have been willing to democratize the former, and stand by such radically revised platforms, consistently bearing out in their lives the professions which they make in their dogmas, then those who to-day are implacably hostile to religion as they know it may find it in their hearts to change their views of that institution inspired by the greatest Friend that the laborer ever had.

II. *Idealism.* The pristine splendor of Christianity was tarnished early by a lust for material possession. Conceived in the fires of a passion for universal good-will, truth, and righteousness, it bade fair to win the world to the most exalted

moral and spiritual standard ever lifted among men. Then came popularity, power, official recognition, opulence, and the vision splendid faded into the common light of day. Christianity imperialized became Christianity demoralized. The unique ethical elements which distinguished it from all other religious movements that ever had been, were lost in a mad scramble for place and worldly emolument. The Holy Roman Empire, the embodiment of the hierarchical system throughout the world, had sold its spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage. The poison with which the body of Christianity was at that time infected has not been drained off since. Insensibly the church even to-day models her polity and constructs her creeds upon the lines laid down by the civil, temporal, and military powers.

But what the world is really hungry for is some food which is not drawn from the granary of the carnal and material. It is just those men who have believed in the impossible, who have caught the attention of a jaded and harassed world in all ages. Never more than to-day, when pomp and circumstance and kings and captains and guns and drums pall on the appetite of nations, are weary peoples asking, "Has religion anything for us more than the false philosophies of force and fury have?" The terribly practical, the prosaically efficient, the coldly expedient,—these have

been the shibboleths of the nations. Now the hour has struck when the world must be saved by the forces of the spirit. Now is the appointed time for the rebirth of the idealism of Christ. Out of the welter of world war come voices more and more insisting that the discarded virtues of honor, truth, faith, patience, and sacrifice are to be the eternal foundations upon which a new civilization must be erected. Good for men as they have been found to be in the microcosm of the home and community and state,—they must be good for man in the macrocosm of inter-racial intercourse, and international reactions. And who is ordained to herald this new day more logically than the Christianity which has wept to see its Master crucified afresh on the fields of Europe? Is she adequate to the task of proving that "love is the greatest thing in the world", that faith is sufficient to remove mountains, that "he who loseth his life shall find it", that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people", that the foundations of the universe are laid in truth and justice, and that the Golden Rule is the supreme law of safe and sound world life? In brief, that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." For this is idealism,* and in the waning of every other

* The word "idealism" is used throughout in the above section in the popular sense, as opposed to that practical material-

philosophy and the failure of every other panacea, to this solution of the way of life the weary world must come.

III. *Intelligence.* Official Christianity may not be acquitted of an attitude of suspicion toward ripe scholarship. Ceasing to burn heretics, it abuses them. Stupidity has been termed less dangerous than learning. Orthodox theology and heterodox science have fought and bled and lived to fight again. Loyalty to the pet phrases of creeds has been more lauded than loyalty to the hard demands of truth. When Genesis and geology disagree there is a verdict in favor of the former only. Schools and colleges which teach their students to think are dangerous to religion. These and countless other professions of distrust and hostility have been hurled at the head of that intelligence which sometimes contradicts the tenets of dogma. But such cannot continue long to be the case, if Christianity as a virile force is to survive. If the processes of a sound and well-ordered scholarship do not verify the assurances of an official creed, it is at least open to discussion whether the former may not be as near the mark as the latter. This much is true that creeds, which are supposed to be rational expressions of religious faith, must be intelligent in their methods of

ism which makes physical good the goal and enlightened self-interest the way of life.

arriving at results, or they stultify both themselves and their makers.

No institution changes its methods of doing business more slowly or with greater protest than the church. Experience which has proved of value in secular activities has been able to make few suggestions to the church because of its innate conservatism. In the organization of its Bible School, to mention only one instance, there are many weak links which make the whole chain liable to break under special strain. It has been computed carefully that fully fifty per cent of its students are lost, never to reurn, at the high school and adolescent age. Between 1908 and 1914, in England, the leading free church showed a decrease of nearly 260,000 members in its Sunday-schools. To what shall the decline be attributed? To antiquated methods of administration in part. But in larger measure to the unsympathetic attitude of many religious leaders toward more effective pedagogical methods based on the newer psychology, and their insensibility toward the results of the soundest scholarship as it relates itself to the Bible and the literature of morals. When pupils of the Sunday-schools reach the age of mental discrimination, it will not anchor their faith in the teachings of Holy Writ to affirm dogmatically that their moral intuitions are untrustworthy because they do not endorse

some Old Testament program of indiscriminate slaughter of enemies; or that the apparent inconsistencies in the Bible are in the mind of the reader; or that the Scriptures are ethically as well as historically infallible; or that the signal display of favor on the part of the Almighty toward Israel has not been repeated toward non-Hebrew nations even unto this day; or that no other literature save the Bible contains revelation which is profitable for salvation. The thinking student knows better than to believe all this, and to insist upon his accepting it can result only in lowering his opinion of the intelligence of the Sunday-school and alienating his affection from it. Thereafter it will be in vain that committees meet and bewail the defection of their youth from the church. Like school, like church; and when it comes to believing a teacher of Scripture on Sunday, or a teacher of history or science or ethics the rest of the week, there is no shadow of doubt whom they will follow.

Whatever may be the path which official Christianity will tread through its orthodox pronouncements, it is evident that the Christianity which is to grip the heart of the present age will be one which hospitably welcomes the alliance of sound learning, and does not despise to throw the light of wisdom upon the road it follows.

IV. *Service.* Religion is ubiquitous, not local;

universal, not insular. This means that religion is not only for all people, but for all departments of life. If it points to a super-mundane destiny, it provides for a mundane economy. "Thy kingdom come on earth" is its watchword. However splendidly it rears its head among the stars, its feet are planted firmly on the ground. Official Christianity has conditioned salvation upon belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and let the matter rest there. Unofficial Christianity supplements this indispensable condition by the word which shows how one is to believe in Christ. The former is the call to profession; the latter, while not belittling profession, makes it terminate in action. The Scriptural beacon-lights of the former are, "Ye must be born again," and "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Scriptural beacon-lights of the latter are "not every one that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven," and "he that heareth these words of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man." The fatal fault of the salvation of orthodoxy is that it has always been too much of a "gabe" (gift) and too little of an "aufgabe" (task). It has been saturated with the mysticism of Paul, and has recognized too little the ethicism of Jesus. This may be demonstrated easily to the most scep-

tical, by an examination of the official creeds of Christianity. In practically every case they will be found to be expositions of the doctrines of the apostle. Union with Christ and confession of Christ, justification by faith, baptism into the new life, the antinomy of the flesh to the spirit, the reconciling death on the cross and the personal second return of Jesus,—these and other doctrines, which are pre-eminently Pauline and not those of the synoptic Jesus, are the material out of which the ecumenical creeds of history have been built.

Now without stultifying itself by repudiating these tenets, which represent an intellectual approximation of the richest Christian experience of the past, the unofficial beliefs of Christendom are to be more and more drawn from the personality, example and teaching of the Jesus of the synoptic gospels. Men in his day who sought the way of salvation were directed into the pathway of self-denying service, because all men were brothers and God was their Father. The touchstone of loyalty to Christ was helpfulness. "Follow me" was the one unconditional demand of discipleship, and following him, his friends were taught to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils," preach the good news and give of themselves in service as freely as they had received. The Golden Rule was the cornerstone of a per-

manent and worthy Christian edifice, and the assurance, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," was the all-sufficient explanation of the meaning of belief in Christ.

It would be hazardous to deny, therefore, that unofficial Christianity, while not renouncing the crystallized doctrinal expressions of a glorious past, will make short work of any system which minimizes Christ and magnifies Paul. "Christianity" has been too long a misnomer. Paulinism, Augustinism, Athanasianism, medievalism,—any and all of these have made creeds out of the dust of the ground and breathed into them the breath of their own life.

That "inward eye" which is "the bliss of solitude" has revealed to the mystic poet who worked his visions out in practical helpfulness, what is the Alpha and the Omega of Christian living.

"Our friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may thy service be?
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following thee.

"We bring no ghastly holocaust,
We pile no graven stone;
He serves thee best who loveth most
His brothers and thine own."

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